

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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R 170541Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8676
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 8034

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV PINT PK
SUBJ: NDP WITHDRAWS FROM NATIONAL ALLIANCE

REF: ISLAMABAD 7694

1. SUMMARY: THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NDP) -- IN ITS
NATIONAL CONVENTION -- HAS OPTED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE PAKISTAN
NATIONAL ALLIANCE (PNA). NDP "ELDER STATESMAN" WALI KHAN IS
SCHEDULED TO RETURN FROM HIS EXTENDED STAY IN ENGLAND THIS WEEK
AND HIS WIFE, NDP VICE PRESIDENT BEGUM NASIM KHAN, RECEIVED A
VOTE OF CONFIDENCE FROM THE CONVENTION GIVING HER THE PARTY'S
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FULL SUPPORT IN THE WAKE OF HER ARREST AND CONVICTION IN LONDON
ON SHOPLIFTING CHARGES.

-- THE WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PNA BY THE NDP COMES WITHIN A FEW DAYS
OF THE EXPECTED ANNOUNCEMENT OF A PNA-MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION
"PARTNERSHIP" CABINET. THE NEW CABINET IS EXPECTED TO BE REVEALED
BY CMLA GENERAL ZIA AFTER "FINAL" MEETINGS WITH THE PNA

LEADERSHIP SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 18. END SUMMARY.

2. THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY NATIONAL CONVENTION WAS HELD AUGUST 14/16 IN KARACHI. ATTENDED BY 300 MEMBERS OF THE PARTY, THE CONVENTION UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO SEVER ITS TIES WITH THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE (PNA) THUS JOINING TWO OTHER PARTIES WHO DEFECTED EARLIER. THE NDP LEADERSHIP HAS PLEDGED ITSELF TO A "LOYAL OPPOSITION" ROLE IN WHATEVER NEW MODUS VIVENDI COMES OUT OF THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE REMAINING PNA MEMBERS ON FORMING A MLA/CIVILIAN PARTNERSHIP CABINET.

3. NDP PRESIDENT SHERBAZ KHAN MAZARI TOLD NEWSMEN AFTER THE CONVENTION DECISION THAT THE SPLIT WITH PNA WAS EFFECTED AS "WE (NDP) CANNOT BE A PARTY TO A GROUP OF POLITICIANS WHO HAVE BETRAYED THE CONSCIENCE AND FAITH REPOSED (IN THEM BY) THE MASSES FOR THE SAKE OF A FEW CHAIRS." HIS REFERENCE IS TO THE PNA LEADERSHIP'S DECISION TO JOIN THE GOVERNMENT AFTER APPARENTLY BACKING DOWN ON PREVIOUS DEMANDS FOR EARLY RETURN TO ELECTIVE GOVERNMENT.

--PNA PRESIDENT MUFTI MAHMUD APPEALED DIRECTLY TO THE NDP TO RECONSIDER ITS DECISION RECALLING NDP LEADER WALI KHAN'S PREVIOUS STATEMENTS THAT THE INTEGRITY OF THE PNA MUST BE PRESERVED IF THE COUNTRY WAS TO RETURN TO CIVILIAN DEMOCRACY.

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--WALI KHAN, IN THE MEANTIME, HAS BEEN LIVING IN LONDON FROM WHENCE HE REPORTEDLY WILL RETURN WITHIN A FEW DAYS. HIS RETURN, HOWEVER, WILL BE TO SWAT IN THE RURAL AREAS OF THE NORTH WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE -- NOT TO THE HOTBEDS OF PARTISAN POLITICS IN THE CITIES. WHILE WALI MAINTAINED A PHYSICAL DISTANCE FROM THE CONVENTION, IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THE DECISION ON WITHDRAWAL WAS MADE WITHOUT HIS CONSENT AND SUPPORT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 8034

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4. WALI KHAN'S PROXY AT THE CONVENTION WAS HIS WIFE (NDP VICE PRESIDENT) BEGUM NASIM KHAN. BEGUM NASIM, PAKISTAN'S PREMIER WOMAN POLITICIAN, CONTRIBUTED HER OWN DRAMATIC OVERTONE TO THE CONVENTION WHEN, FOLLOWING PRESS REPORTS OF HER ARREST IN LONDON ON AUGUST 2, SHE SUBMITTED HER RESIGNATION AS PARTY VICE PRESIDENT. THE STORY OF THE ARREST FIRST REACHED THE PAKISTANI PRESS ON AUGUST 3 WHEN IT REPORTED THE POLITICAL LEADER HAD BEEN ARRESTED FOR SHOP LIFTING ITEMS OF UNDERWEAR IN A MARKS & SPENCER STORE. SUBSEQUENT STORIES REPORTED HER "GUILTY" PLEA AND CONVICTION TO A 250 POUND STERLING FINE.

-- RUMORS WERE RIFE FOR A FEW DAYS THAT THE CHARGE WAS A CONFIDENTIAL

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"FRAME-UP" ENGINEERED BY MUSTAFA KHAR AND OTHER BHUTTO SUPPORTERS IN LONDON. THE LOCAL POLITICIANS SEEMED TO BE AWAITING FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS WHEN THE NDP ANNOUNCED THE RECEIPT OF BEGUM NASIM'S RESIGNATION LETTER.

--JUST BEFORE THE NDP CONVENTION OPENED, HOWEVER, THE PRESS CARRIED ADDITIONAL STORIES BASED ON TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS FROM LONDON IN WHICH BEGUM NASIM REPORTEDLY SAID THE CHARGES WERE DROPPED AND THE WHOLE THING WAS A MISTAKE. SHE ALSO ANNOUNCED AT THAT TIME THAT SHE WOULD RETURN TO KARACHI FOR THE CONVENTION.

--ON HER ARRIVAL IN PAKISTAN SHE AGAIN CHANGED HER STORY. SHE DID NOT DENY THE CONVICTION NOR HER PLEA BUT BLAMED THE ENTIRE MATTER ON A "JEWISH CONSPIRACY" AGAINST ALL MUSLIMS IN THE UK. SHE SAID

SHE HAD PLEADED GUILTY TO AVOID BEING DETAINED AND WAS APPEALING THE SENTENCE. ALTHOUGH SHE WAS UNABLE TO PROVE AT THE TIME OF THE HEARING THAT SHE HAD PAID FOR THE DISPUTED UNDERWEAR, SHE TOLD THE PRESS THAT, WHILE PACKING FOR HER RETURN TRIP, SHE DISCOVERED THE RECEIPT AND TURNED IT OVER TO HER LAWYER FOR THE APPEAL. BEGUM NASIM MADE NO REFERENCE TO THE EARLIER SUSPICIONS THAT BHUTTO'S PPP SUPPORTERS IN LONDON HAD FRAMED HER.

5. BEGUM NASIM'S RESIGNATION WAS REJECTED BY THE CONVENTION AND SHE WAS PORTRAYED AS A HEROINE, VICTIMIZED BY THE JEWISH CONSPIRACY AGAINST ALL MUSLIMS IN THE UK. THE CONVENTION DECRIED THE SAD STATE OF BRITISH JUSTICE.

6. COMMENT: THE DEPARTURE OF THE NDP FROM THE PNA WAS NOT UNEXPECTED. THE PARTY HAS BEEN ACTIVELY PURSUING SUPPORT LATELY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND HAS APPARENTLY ENJOYED SOME PROGRESS IN BALUCHISTAN WHERE TRADITIONAL LEADERS HAVE BEEN MAKING PRONOUNCEMENTS SUPPORTIVE OF THE NDP. THE LONG-AWAITED RETURN OF THE REAL LEADER OF THE PARTY -- WALI KHAN -- WILL BE ANOTHER
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HIGHLIGHT FOR NDP MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS.

--THE DECISION MADE BY THE CONVENTION PUTS THE NDP ON A PARALLEL COURSE (BUT NOT NECESSARILY A COOPERATIVE COURSE) WITH ASGHAR KHAN'S TEHRIK-I-ISTIQLAL PARTY WHICH PREVIOUSLY WITHDREW FROM THE ALLIANCE AND ANNOUNCED ITSELF AS "THE" OPPOSITION. WHILE ASGHAR PROMISED ACTIVE, CRITICAL OPPOSITION, THE NDP ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MORE CAREFUL TO UNDERLINE ITS INTENTIONS TO AVOID CONFRONTATION WITH THE MARTIAL LAW GOVERNMENT.

--BEGUM NASIM'S ARREST AND ITS SUBSEQUENT PUBLICITY WAS EFFECTIVELY USED BY HER SUPPORTERS TO CREATE A MARTYR IMAGE. THE PUBLIC RELATIONS HANDLING APPROACHED BRILLIANCE AS -- WHILE NEVER DIRECTLY DENYING THE GUILTY PLEA -- IT OBFUSCATED THE FACTS BY A "SCATTER-GUN" TECHNIQUE OF BLAMING: THE PPP; THE JEWISH CONSPIRACY; THE LAMENTABLE CONDITION OF BRITISH JUSTICE; AND PURE CIRCUMSTANCE.

--IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE A WOMAN OF BEGUM NASIM'S STATUS AND WEALTH INDULGING IN SHOP-LIFTING BUT THE CONVICTION, BASED ON WHATEVER EVIDENCE, COULD HAVE BEEN DEVASTATING IN THIS MUSLIM SOCIETY. THE PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORTS APPEAR TO HAVE TAKEN THE PRESSURE OFF COMPLETELY AND THE ISSUE MAY BE FORGOTTEN. IF THE CONVICTION IS UPHELD IN APPEAL, HOWEVER, THE MATTER COULD BE RESURRECTED BY WALI AND BEGUM NASIM'S POLITICAL ENEMIES BOTH HERE AND IN LONDON.
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